

Frequently Asked Questions: Medical Certificates

1. What is a medical certificate?

A medical certificate is a document that serves as proof that a mariner meets the required medical and physical standards, per the publication of the Federal Register (FR). This FR incorporates the 2010 Amendments to the STCW Convention into the U.S. regulations. It also makes other necessary changes to our national regulations for the purposes of reorganization, clarification, and needed updates.

The medical certificate is the Coast Guard's authorization that mariners have met the following requirements:

- Have the physical capability to fulfill all the requirements of basic training as required by Section A-VI/1 of STCW
- Demonstrate adequate hearing and speech to communicate effectively and detect any audible alarms
- Have no medical condition, disorder or impairment that will prevent the effective and safe conduct of the seafarer's routine and emergency duties
- Are not suffering from any medical condition likely to be aggravated by service at sea or to render the seafarer unfit for service or to endanger the health and safety of other personnel on board
- Are not taking medication that has side effects that will impair judgment, balance or any other requirements for effective and safe performance of routine and emergency duties on board.

2. How do I request a duplicate medical certificate?

Submit your request for a duplicate medical certificate to the NMC via phone (1-888-427-5662) or e-mail (IASKNMC@uscg.mil). Your request must include: full name, mariner reference number, reason for the request, and desired mailing address.

3. How does it affect me?

Mariners holding STCW endorsements:

As of April 2, 2014, the Coast Guard completed issuing medical certificates to all mariners holding valid international endorsements. Because of the large number of certificates issued in a relatively short time, the expiration dates on these medical certificates will vary depending upon when the mariner's merchant mariner credential (MMC) expires. A mariner may not serve under the authority of their STCW endorsement without holding a valid medical certificate in accordance with 46 CFR 15.401(c)(1).

First-Class Pilots:

Although First Class Pilots continue to be subject to the annual physical examination requirements of 46 CFR 11.709(b), a new medical certificate will only be issued every 2 years. Pilots will receive a medical certificate at their next annual medical review or when processing an application that requires a medical evaluation such as issuing an original, raise-in-grade or renewal MMC.

All Other Mariners, Including Those with National Endorsements:

As of January 24, 2014, the Coast Guard began issuing medical certificates to each qualified mariner when processing an application that requires a medical evaluation such as issuing an original, raise-in-grade, or renewal MMC.

Mariners are required to carry a valid medical certificate, once issued, in order to sail under the authority of their MMC.

4. What do I do with the medical certificate when I receive it?

The medical certificate folds in half, to be placed in the plastic sleeve located in the back of your MMC booklet.

**** VERY IMPORTANT: It is not to be taped, glued, laminated, peeled, or detached. ****

- Use a blue or black ballpoint pen to sign your certificate as soon as you receive it.
- Do not separate the pages of your certificate.

- Note your expiration dates; they coincide with the type of service you are engaged in (STCW, National, or Pilot).
- We require that you keep your certificate in the plastic sleeve at the back of your MMC.
- If your certificate indicates that you have a medical waiver, you must comply with the requirements of the accompanying waiver letter.
- In addition to a valid medical certificate, the waiver letter must be carried with you when you sail under the authority of your MMC. As a result of the waiver, your certificate may also carry a limited expiration date of 1 or 2 years.

5. What is the impact on employers?

After March 24, 2017, a person may not employ or engage an individual on a vessel subject to STCW unless that individual maintains a current medical certificate.

After March 24, 2019, a person may not employ or engage any individual on a national voyage that is required to hold an MMC unless that individual maintains a current medical certificate.

Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) Applicability

The MLC entered into force on August 20, 2013. The MLC requires mariners serving on vessels to have a valid MLC medical certificate. The U.S. has not ratified the MLC. However, the MLC contains a “no more favorable treatment clause” that requires ratifying governments to impose MLC requirements on all vessels when calling on their ports.

Vessels that cannot demonstrate compliance with the MLC may be at risk of port state control actions, including detention, when operating in the port of a ratifying nation. The new medical certificates meet the medical certification requirements of the MLC.

In the event a vessel is not subject to STCW but is subject to MLC and is calling on a port in a country that has ratified the MLC, the Coast Guard will issue a medical certificate to qualified crewmembers upon proper application under reference 46 CFR Part 10, Subpart C.

**** If a mariner's medical certificate expires during a voyage, it will remain valid until the next United States port of call, provided that the period after expiration does not exceed 90 days. ****

6. Is there a cost for the medical certificate?

There is no cost for a medical certificate.

Normal fees still apply to MMC transactions consistent with 46 CFR Table 10.219(a). A medical certificate will not negate nor increase the normal MMC fees.

7. How do I apply for a medical certificate?

The CG-719K or CG-719K/E serve as the application form for a medical certificate. In order to renew the medical certificate prior to expiration, mariners must submit an application. Applications must be submitted through an REC.

A CG-719B is not required and there are no fees associated with applying for a medical certificate.

Mariners subject to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), but that do not hold an STCW endorsement must submit a CG-719K or 719K/E to an REC for issuance of a medical certificate.

8. What are dates of examination and expiration?

Date of Examination

The Coast Guard considers the date of examination to be the date that it approves the issuance of a medical certificate. It will not coincide with the date the medical practitioner signed the 719K or 719 K/E form; nor will it necessarily coincide with the issuance date of the medical certificate or MMC.

Dates of Expiration

Pay close attention to the three different expiration dates listed on the certificate. Each medical certificate will carry three expiration dates:

- **Mariners who sail under the authority of an STCW endorsement:** The expiration date applicable to a mariner serving onboard vessels to which STCW applies will be for up to 2 years past the date of examination unless the mariner is under the age of 18, in which case the maximum period of validity will be 1 year.

- **Mariners who sail as pilots:** The expiration date applicable to a mariner serving under the authority of an endorsement as First-Class Pilot or acting as a pilot under another endorsement will be a maximum period of 2 years.
- **Expiration for national mariners:** Medical certificates issued to national mariners will be issued for a maximum of 5 years.

9. What about Medical Waivers?

Existing Medical Waivers:

The Coast Guard may grant a waiver if an applicant for an MMC does not possess the vision, hearing or general physical condition necessary and extenuating circumstances warrant special consideration.

Time-Restricted Medical Certificates:

Mariners may receive a time-restricted certificate. Those certificates will expire in either 1 or 2 years depending on the medical condition, condition status and the need for periodic medical evaluations. This 1- or 2-year expiration date will apply to all medical certificate categories (e.g., FCP, STCW, and National Certificates). Applicants must comply with the accompanying waiver letter in order to renew their certificate.

More information regarding operational limitations and restrictions on medical certificates can be found at federalregister.gov.